Pierre Boogaerts Reality, Vision, Image

Pierre Dessureault

with an essay by Michel Denée

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Foreword

For nearly twenty years, Pierre Boogaerts was engaged in exploring and elucidating the mechanisms of vision and photography through distinct series of works, which were presented in numerous exhibitions in Canada and abroad. These included shows devoted to his work at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, the Canadian Cultural Center in Paris, 49th Parallel in New York, the National Gallery of Canada, the International Centre of Photography in New York, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the Palais des beaux-arts in Brussels. In 1992, when he ended his concentrated exploration of the medium of photography, Boogaerts chose to donate his complete body of work to the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography. The artist's gift to the CMCP of all of his negatives, hundreds of exhibition prints and *maquettes*, and a large number of related documents has provided an exceptional opportunity to comprehend the stages in the development of his thinking.

Boogaerts' very personal work is virtually unique in contemporary Canadian art, both in the preoccupations it reveals and in the depth and consistency of purpose reaffirmed over the course of his career. The component parts of his work overlap one another to form a multi-dimensional whole: the negatives and transparencies constitute the initial data, the raw material of photography; the *maquettes* work with this raw material to test the concepts; and the different versions of the finished product intended for exhibition become the concrete formulation of the intellectual labours.

This exhibition and the accompanying catalogue draw on the hundreds of pieces Boogaerts has generously donated to the CMCP to reveal the scope and beauty of the collection.

Pierre Théberge, O.C., C.Q., Director, National Gallery of Canada

Acknowledgements

There are many to thank for assisting Pierre Boogaerts' photographs to public view. First, we are indebted to the artist for entrusting his complete works to the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography. The gift has particular relevance for the CMCP, since the nature of photography itself is at the core of his exploration. We thank Pierre Boogaerts for this valuable resource, for the articulate inquiry that it represents, and for the beautiful and poetic rendering of the finished art works.

Several individuals were involved in the realization of the donation. I would like to acknowledge in particular Martha Langford, Founding Director of the CMCP, to whom the offer of donation was made; Dr. Shirley Thomson, then Director of the NGC; and the Acquisition Committee of the Board of the National Gallery of Canada, with Special Advisor Phyllis Lambert, who with foresight and enthusiasm approved the acquisition.

Over the past ten years others have been involved in the organization, documentation, and care of the collection. I would like to thank Marielle Lavertu and Bertrand Carrière, in Montreal, who prepared an inventory of the works, and in Ottawa, CMCP Registrar Sue Lagasi and Assistant Registrar Tim Campbell, assisted by interns from the University of Ottawa and Carleton University (Jonathan Newman and Melanie Brown), who received the works. We are indebted as well to Denis Lessard, who researched and thoughtfully organized a comprehensive list of works and who prepared Boogaerts' bibliography for publication.

I would especially like to thank Pierre Dessureault, whose interest in Pierre Boogaerts' photography initiated the relationship between artist and institution in 1979. It is therefore fitting that he select the works for inclusion in this exhibition and write the introductory text.

Many National Gallery staff members gave time and attention to the realization of this project. However, I would like to mention the particular contributions of Conservators Richard Gagnier and John McElhone, Chief of Publications Serge Thériault, and Project Manager Julie Hodgson.

Finally, I would like to thank the Director of the National Gallery of Canada, Pierre Théberge, who has supported and encouraged the celebration of this major gift.

Martha Hanna, Director, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography

Pierre Dessureault

Dismantling Photography

... [R]eproduction of nature by Daguerre's instrument is simply one more form placed in our hands... it is simply a new means at our disposal, a process, without analogue until now,

for translating into material reality the impression made on us by a particular aspect of nature. Until now, the artist has had at his disposal a paintbrush, a pencil, a burin, a lithographic surface; now, in addition, he has the lens of a camera. A lens is an instrument like a pencil or a paintbrush; photography is a process, like drawing and engraving, because what makes the artist is the feeling, not the process.[1]

The artist Pierre Boogaerts has always attempted to reconcile the various aspects of sight and vision and to discover what is involved in the act of looking. Between 1972 and 1990, Boogaerts set himself the project of disassembling the workings of photography and thus demonstrating how vision has been conditioned in the Western world. What he was investigating, both theoretically in his writings and practically in his art works, was not the truth of images or their correspondence to the world we perceive, but rather the essential mediation from which they result. All of his work is a careful, rigorous laying open of the intellectual operations by which images are structured into representations of the world as perceived by the senses.

The consistent conjunction of theory and practice in Boogaerts' work could be viewed as the co-existence of two complementary approaches, formulated in terms that are invented as investigation of the issues progresses. Ideas are constantly fermenting and bubbling up, leaving room for new questions to rush in and revive the debate. The intuition manifest in the art works continually refers back to thought processes that place the visual approach within a broader context of knowledge. Boogaerts' production represents both a thinker's rational search for a coherent statement and an artisan's testing of the limits of his craft and materials. In the latter role, Boogaerts tests and manipulates his tools and materials in order to repossess the physical existence of the world.

Boogaerts' work cannot be summed up either as a body of individual works that line up in an orderly fashion along a continuum, or as a collection of

[1] Louis Figuier, *La Photographie au salon de 1859*, in André Rouillé, *La Photographie en France–Textes et controverses: une Anthologie 1816–1871* (Paris: Éditions Macula, 1989), p. 323.

examples that support and illustrate their creator's point of view. It is more like a long sequence of cycles, each one representing a specific aspect of the medium the artist has worked on, ultimately arriving at a multi-faceted view of the process by which photography records reality and constructs the visible world.

Approaches in Photography (1972–1975)

To use the photographic medium today entails that inevitably one must confront and manoeuvre the massive attitudes encrusted in its image and mechanism, which are veiled by the normalcy of this gaze. My photographic work is to recognize these attitudes and to attempt a more complex gaze, despite and in concert with these attitudes. To attempt a more "heterogenous," "plurivalent" gaze.[2]

Pierre Boogaerts was born in Brussels in 1946 and came to Canada in December 1971. He belongs to the generation of artists who adopted photography as their medium and established it as a part of current art practices. Like his contemporaries Serge Tousignant, Bill Vazan, and Suzy Lake, Montreal artists who gravitated to the Véhicule Art Gallery in the early 1970s, he was influenced by Pop Art, Land Art, and conceptual art in his questioning of the nature, formulation, and function of the work of art.

Boogaerts' studies in the plastic arts at the Institut Saint-Luc in Brussels initially steered him towards painting, and between 1967 and 1971 he was in fact a painter. He soon abandoned the medium, however, and produced three series of multimedia works in which photography played a key role: *Irrigation* (1972), *References / Yellow Banana Tree Plantation* (1972–75), and *On the ground in the air* (1972–74). These three series laid the foundations for his investigation of the photographic medium.

[2] *Pierre Boogaerts: Travaux photographiques–1984/89–Photographical Works* (Chicoutimi: Galerie Séquence, 1990), n.p. Translated by Robert McGee.

The series of works entitled *Irrigation* fits the description of Land Art. Boogaerts deployed a variety of transparent materials in the landscape and used photography to record the presence of these installations, which were intended to be removed immediately afterwards. This project established once and for all the presence of nature in his work—nature never appears in its pure state, however, but rather as a series of phenomena created by the culture and shaped by the artist's interventions.

In his initial contact with photography, Boogaerts takes up the ideas of Andy Warhol, who advocated the disappearance of the artist's personality, suppression of the painter's ability as seen in the brushstrokes of a painting or the lines of a drawing, and the substitution of a slick, detached, mechanical view of everyday realities. In such a context the camera is merely a tool that translates literally what it sees, and the photographic image a shortcut between nature and its representation.

References / Yellow Banana Tree Plantation explored photography's power to create analogies with reality; this notion of reference would be significant in Boogaerts' later work. In this collection of images, strongly influenced by Pop Art, Boogaerts gave himself free rein to draw parallels, frequently humorous ones. Faced with an excess of banana trees, lamp-posts, or Bic pens which have in common primarily their position, their shape, and their yellow colour, viewers feel they are looking at an endless catalogue, merely the product of a machine designed to produce reproductions and line them up ad infinitum.

The notion of reference introduces a way of thinking by analogy rather than by deduction. If one term is set forth, another can be found through resemblance, similarity, comparison, association, and correspondence. This mode of thought uses the imagination to link two or more objects that are essentially different but have some characteristics in common. Such linking introduces a fluidity of movement to the associations, which form and disperse as they proliferate. The method is poetic in that it keeps bringing each thing

into contact with all the others, making it part of a network of correspondences and moving freely from what is tangible to what is intelligible.

At this stage, photography is still dependent on the traditional disciplines of drawing and silkscreening. These works repeatedly contrast mechanical reproduction through photography with manual representation through drawing: on the one hand rigour, proliferation of details, realism; on the other, fluidity of representation, stylization, imagination.

On the ground in the air challenges the privileged, fixed viewpoint that unifies the perspectivist vision inherited from the Renaissance. By blurring the distinct spatial reference points of top and bottom, by blotting out the horizon and eradicating depth, Boogaerts, like the Constructivists before him, explodes perspective. The viewpoint floats and moves: top and bottom are reversed, earth and sky become confused. Compositions unfold according to a visual, pictorial logic that is independent of reality as perceived by the senses. The eye of the observer becomes one with the camera, and both move about freely in space, like the Man with a Movie Camera celebrated in Dziga Vertov's film:

I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it.

Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility, *I am in constant motion*,
I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb onto them, I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse, I plunge full speed into a crowd,
I outstrip running soldiers, I fall on my back, I ascend with an airplane, I plunge and soar together with plunging and soaring bodies. Now I, a camera, fling myself along their resultant, maneuvring in the chaos of movement, recording movement, starting with movements composed of the most complex combinations.

Freed from the rule of sixteen-seventeen frames per second, free of the limits of time and space, *I put together any given points in the universe*, no matter where I've recorded them. My path leads to the creation of a fresh perception of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you.[3]

[3] Dziga Vertov, "Kinoks: a revolution," in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, edited by Annette Michelson (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 17–18. Translated from the Russian by Kevin O'Brien.

The play of the camera in carving up space and fragmenting representation interferes with perception and reading of the work, which is no longer simply a cut-out piece with clearly defined borders that organizes a portion of the real world, but an arrangement of images spread out on a wall. The viewer can approach the work from any position and scan it from top to bottom, left to right, diagonally, or in any other direction.

The disappearance of a privileged viewpoint favoured by perspectivist vision makes way for the concept of position—in other words, location in relation to other things. Through the series of works dealing specifically with photography, Boogaerts spelled out all the denotations and connotations of the word: composition (arrangement of the components), recomposition (reconstitution), disposition (putting in order), decomposition (separation into components), and superimposition (placing one thing on top of another).

Dismantling the Photographic Process (1975–1983)

That the way we see is the result of a way of thinking, that thought is closely related to vision, that there is an interrelation: that we see as we think and think as we see, that we have to think to see and that we see only what we think, all this is becoming increasingly obvious today. This means that our way of looking is always the result of a certain organization of the real world, and that looking constructs reality in accordance with its own point of view.[4]

Boogaerts' purely photographic work began with two series that returned to the issues raised in *On the ground in the air* and elaborated on them. The first, "*Synthetization" of the Sky* (1973–75), looks upward, towards the sky, and uses the contact sheet to structure what is looked at; the second, *New York, N.Y.* (1976–77), closely frames what is seen at ground level and reconstructs Boogaerts' walks through the city according to the number and order of exposures in a roll of film.

[4] Pierre Boogaerts, "Perspective, photographie et 'encadrement,'" *Parachute*, no. 30 (March–April–May 1983), p. 33.

In both series, the artist's gaze is a mobile framing device that roams freely over the real world, moving along whatever axis he determines, within the limits of the medium's potential. The photographic framing embraces this shifting movement, simultaneously including and excluding. The fragmentary data thus collected show a portion of reality by organizing it, but hide its totality, which remains beyond the camera range.

"Synthetization" of the Sky (1973–75) is a series of variations on the configuration of the sky and clouds, in which Boogaerts illustrates the power of photography to transcribe reality, give it structure, and organize it by methods specific to the medium: framing and sequencing.

Boogaerts starts from a very simple idea: "the use of photographic film with 36 exposures, bearing in mind the appearance that the contact sheet will have after the film is developed."[5] His subject is clouds silhouetted against the blue of the sky. The artist took the shots so that each frame was connected to the next. In so doing, he cut a piece out of the real world, removing a fragment that included certain elements and excluded others, thus overlapping inside and outside, interior and exterior. The alternation of the frames creates a composition of geometrical patterns on the contact sheet. This grid-like distribution juxtaposes the images and lines them up one after another to create a multi-dimensional reading in keeping with the disappearance of a fixed viewpoint.

The photographic process structures the fluidity of the natural phenomena: the contact sheet reproduces the seventy exposures in the order conceived of by the artist in order to create geometric motifs. The arrangement reflects the artist's decisions and actions. The framing of the individual images on the contact sheet forms a picture within a picture; the fragments form a whole that, while it reflects the individual parts, nevertheless amplifies reality through the cumulative effect of the assembled components.

[5] Manuscript by Pierre Boogaerts, n.d., collection of the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography.

Each of the eleven pieces in the first part of *New York, N.Y.* (1976–77) is a grid consisting of twenty photographs. The number indicates a closed system imposed by the industry, within which Boogaerts works. The order of the images follows the same path Boogaerts took on his walks through the city, providing a series of impressions, or moments, that emphasize the particular relationship of the artist's body to the environment and his connection with the world. The juxtaposition of the images establishes relationships of contiguity and proximity between the moments they record and allows a glimpse of the artist's route. The dates and locations of Boogaerts' works are always precisely identified, as though to indicate that they belong to a specific time and place and to situate them in a progression that has both antecedents and consequences.

Over the course of these reassembled perambulations, oppositions arise between interior and exterior, reference and interference, nature and culture. The viewer keeps oscillating between these contradictory poles. The first part of the work unfolds out of doors, in the streets of Manhattan; the second shows the interiors of ten New York artists' studios. Each grid consists of similar elements. The series of squares with bushes and luxuriant foliage, or their total opposite, deserts of pebbles and sand, produce an unexpected topography. New York appears not as a megalopolis of concrete, steel, and glass, but as a garden in which nature and culture, interior and exterior co-exist, representing complementary and inseparable facets of a single reality.

Playing with preconceived ideas and attitudes that masquerade as certainties, Boogaerts turns reality on its head, blurring directions, tricking our spatial perception, and rendering top and bottom indistinguishable. Redefining the borders between the natural and the manufactured, he places nature in a cultural context. By juxtaposing groups of images, he reveals links of proximity and synchronicity between different times and places.

Blue Cars and Sky above Each of Them, New York/Montreal–1977/79 uses a simple analogy to resolve the dichotomy between high and low. Boogaerts juxtaposes two images: one of the sky; the other, close-ups of a number of blue automobiles. The colour blue in all its modulations unifies these two elements, one drawn from nature, the other a quintessential symbol of urban life. This simple juxtaposition is the gateway to a poetic universe of visual metaphors related both to the context of the images and to their grouping. Distinctions between top and bottom are confounded and even deliberately reversed by various mirror effects and reflections that create a complex network of resonances: one after another, the clouds in the sky echo the "clouds" of white paint on the blue of the cars; the shiny surface of a car's hood becomes a mirror reflecting the urban environment.

The transition from the three-dimensionality of nature to the two-dimensionality of a reflection recalls Plato's cave and the images projected on its walls. This seminal myth constructs an analogy between the visible world and the world of Ideas, the latter being the only sound basis for the truth of any knowledge we may acquire in the world. Knowledge for Plato becomes a long voyage of the soul, which penetrates the appearances and illusions of a flat and dimensionless shadow theatre, and finally, through the dialectic and maieutic processes, rises to the contemplation of the Beautiful, the Good, and the Just, immutable models of the individual ideas that emanate from them.

The Renaissance and the Classical Age sought to replace this two-dimensional world with perspective and a philosophy of the seeing subject, for which the central analogy was the *camera obscura*. Like the eye, the *camera obscura* produces images that translate the colours, volume, proportions, and depth of the physical world. A number of fundamental ideas emerged from this simple analogy: among them were the projection of light rays, representation of the perceived world, reduction of scale, painting with light,

accuracy in drawing, and the concept of a window framing a portion of the visible world. The static model of knowledge of the material world, a one-dimensional emanation of an ideal world that is the only true one, was replaced by a projective model in which images act as intermediaries between the world of the senses and the world of understanding. The path to knowledge thus becomes a long process of deciphering "the great book of the world."[6]

Screen Series comprises three groups of works: *Screen Series: 2 Photographs Taken from My Window* and *Screen Series: Vertical Skies*, both produced in 1976, and *Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y.*, dating from 1978–79. All three are statements with complex ramifications, in which Boogaerts sets up a number of visual metaphors. Correspondences are established between the camera, the window, the mirror, and the architecture of New York, all products of culture that shape the visible and define the representation.

Screen Series: 2 Photographs Taken from My Window (1976) presents two colour photographs side by side, the first a low-angle shot of a window, the second the reflection of the sky on the mirror of the camera. These two photographs are juxtaposed with, first, the diagram on the ground glass of the camera and, second, an image of the inside of the camera. The four elements indicate the mechanical nature of photography, dependent on a machine that allows it to carve pieces out of reality, find analogies, evoke correspondences, and establish parallels—all this in a paradoxical movement that simultaneously includes and excludes, lifts out a portion and rejects what is out of range, and substitutes the thinness of the image for the "thickness" of reality.

Like the camera, the window and the mirror act as screens to structure vision. The window, an opening in a building, connects the interior space and the external world; a transparent intermediary, it encourages passage between them. The mirror, the main element of the camera's viewfinder,

[6] René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), p. 38 (author's translation).

similarly allows the passage of light and the representation of the object, and faithfully reflects the image, but upside down. This transposition shows the extent to which representation is independent of the visible world; the parts of an image have an order all their own. Window and mirror allude to theoretical concepts with a long history: that photography is a "mirror of reality" and a "window on the world."

This analogy, articulated in *Screen Series*, was elaborated in three groups of more modest scope produced around the same time. *Life Size (or the Nature of the Media), Window in Winter, 1978* (1977–78) revisited the inversions so dear to Boogaerts, establishing a correspondence between the ideas developed in *Screen Series* and the cathode ray tube, another perspectivist window that creates a particular picture space. The TV screen captures nature, flattens it, and transplants it into the cultural domain. Taking the visual resonances to their limit, Boogaerts draws out the analogy into poetry: the blank screen scanned by the electronic signal evokes a snowstorm.

Boogaerts brought together all the terms of this analogy in a *maquette* entitled *Click-Eclipse* (1979–86), a montage consisting of photographs and documents he had used as reference and illustrations for an article published in the issue 57 of the magazine *Parachute*.[7] The strip of eight photographs at the top of the montage is taken from *Camera Series* (1978–79), in which Boogaerts adopted a number of visual motifs he had already used, adding the hand of the artist putting the lens cap back on the camera, causing a fade to black.

The central element of the *maquette* is the juxtaposition of a close-up of an eye and a page from *Life* Magazine showing an eclipse of the sun viewed by a team of scientists in an airplane flying at an altitude of 35,000 feet. The two images present the same motif, in the same way as the labyrinth inlaid in the stone floor in the nave of Chartres Cathedral and the great rose window in the main façade present the same motif. The labyrinth and the

[7] Pierre Boogaerts, "Clic-Éclipse : voir et croire, lumière et aveuglement ou encore: la photographie comme modèle des arts, des idées et des a priori," *Parachute*, no. 57 (January–February–March 1990), pp. 16–23.

rose motif would coincide perfectly if one were superimposed on the other, like the positive and negative of a single reality marked by oppositions and inversions: low–high, stone–glass, earth–sky, opacity–transparency.

Just as medieval mysticism tried to reconcile earth and heaven, knowledge and faith, this *maquette* systematizes a personal cosmology. Eclipses change day to night, merge Earth and Moon, cause light to spring forth from darkness. As the photograph of the Challenger launch illustrates, we can escape Earth's attraction and move freely in space; this is a complete reversal of perspective, a change of viewpoint that allows us to perceive earthlight as well as moonlight. The infinitely large and the infinitely small come together.

Boogaerts' artistic journey was marked by *maquettes* like this one which served the same purpose as a notebook. He used them to make spontaneous, sketchy notes on the status of his research, and to take stock of his concerns of the moment. At once notes, reflections, sketches, and summaries, they mark breaks and follow tangents in the artist's development.

The other two parts of *Screen Series* deal with the architecture of New York, representing the archetype of the City and the ideas that it represents.

Screen Series: Vertical Skies (1976) explores the sky as framed by buildings: the way skyscrapers cut into the field of vision defines urban space and the way it is perceived. The images are lined up one after another, forming a series of vistas, each patch of blue sky another variation on the theme. *Screen Series: Street Skies* (1978–79) explores the same urban space, this time by creating a series of geometric configurations. Of the forty-two pieces comprising the work, some are constructed horizontally, others vertically, still others in the shape of an X or a T. In these long panoramas, each assembled from several images joined together, Boogaerts superimposes the framing by the camera on the framing of the sky by skyscrapers; both condition the way we look and perceive. Boogaerts' camera lens scans the vistas of sky between the skyscrapers of Manhattan, duplicating the movement

of the eye, and each photograph becomes a fragment to be juxtaposed with the next in a reconstruction of the act of looking.

While the preceding works rigorously aligned images with clearly defined edges to form a grid, *Screen Series: Street Skies* breaks the boundaries of the images and overlaps them. The edges of the individual rectangles disappear into the whole, allowing for the construction of a view made up of hints of shapes, lines, and colours. By a subtle play of superimpositions and visual connections, the picture space is recomposed so that the image becomes the sum of its fragments, aligned along an axis of vision that multiplies successive viewpoints and overflows the boundaries of a standard photograph. The result is an extended vision that creates a new picture space, governed by its own laws.

An afternoon on my balcony, Montreal, August 18, 1978 represents both a pause and a link in Boogaerts' artistic journey. In this intimate journal in black and white, he continues his study of the connections between nature and culture, this time basing it on the duration and logic of lived time.

This all-of-a-piece work could serve as a model of Boogaerts' method. He begins with a simple, ordinary situation, documented by the camera. Over the course of an afternoon, the artist explores his world: sensations overlap one another in a lyrical continuity. Little by little an interaction begins between the analytical reflection contributed by the quotations from Serge Moscovici's book, which punctuate the progress of the afternoon, and the world of pure impressions recorded by the artist's gaze, which is one with the immediate environment and the moment. This intense presence in the world is translated by an infinite number of notations that vibrate with the frequency of each object.

Each image embraces the moment in all its texture and fullness. The use of black and white allows the play of light over the surface of objects and the

shimmering of the shadows to materialize the passage of time. These scattered, fleeting moments are reassembled chronologically in grids, providing a narrative thread to the artist's reconstruction of the afternoon. This organization allows us to view the sequence of events again and, since our viewing can be as flexible as we wish, to ignore the real chronology and create our own sequence. This quasi-Proustian reversibility of time allows us to reappropriate each instant as an affective whole.

The reflexive aspect of this work is particularly marked. The constant movement between the natural setting of the event (the balcony, the play of light in the foliage) and the analytical reflection on nature (the quotations from Moscovici's book) reproduces the movement of thought itself as it organizes perceptions into ideas. The written word brings together and develops ideas in the discursive mode; the photography structures the visible world in an image and reconstructs the passage of time in a sequence.

Street Corners (Pyramids)–N.Y. 1978/79 carries further the work of photographic reconstruction begun in *Screen Series: Street Skies*. The setting is the same, but this time Boogaerts recreates the simple shape of a pyramid. Using analogy, he engages in visual play, plunging into the heart of history and linking the past–the omnipresent shape of the pyramid–to the present–the dizzying vistas between the skyscrapers. As New York represents the most advanced point of contemporary technological thinking, the pyramid embodies the knowledge and aspirations of an ancient culture. By juxtaposing the two beyond time and space, Boogaerts indicates the persistence throughout history of certain motifs and mechanisms of thought.

What is striking about the work is its monumentality, which is manifest from the outset in the artist's intentions. While reconstructing the shape of a pyramid using New York street corners appears at first glance to be simplicity itself, the potential of the system turns out to be nearly inexhaustible. The endless

variations and permutations at the very heart of the system are located somewhere between the finite and the infinite, the real and the virtual, the achieved and the unachieved: the idea always goes beyond the potential of the system by allowing infinite repetition.

The introductory part of this work includes working notes establishing the motif and setting out the strategies to be used. Through the ten parts that follow, each grouping becomes more complex as the system gradually snowballs and incorporates an increasing number of components to define an autonomous picture space. The pieces forming 1 to 4 each contain one, two, three, or four images, respectively, assembled in vertical groupings that reconstitute the motif of the pyramid. These pieces play with the notion that the act of looking implies mobility and reversibility: our eye, like the artist's, can scan the panoramas, anchored at their base by the pyramid motif, from top to bottom. From the outset and throughout the entire cycle, the pyramid's position defines the orientation of these constructions, which could be displayed on the wall along other axes that would appear just as logical and natural. Parts 5 and 6 introduce a new variable: the images are mounted horizontally, and viewers now scan them from left to right instead of from top to bottom.

In part 7, the images are arranged in groups with irregular outlines in which positive and negative spaces alternate to reconstruct the initial motif. This is no longer a panoramic view that recreates the picture space according to a more or less defined horizon line, but a fragmented view in which the image is the sum of the visual components and the spaces left blank between them, synthesized by the persistence of vision and by the imagination. Parts 8 and 9 recompose the pyramid in compact blocks with no spacing. Part 10 suggests its form by delineating its contour with a fine outline, its interior empty: the pyramid shape becomes a simple line, a negative of the image.

The scale of the pieces is also monumental. While each of the photographs is a reduction of the real world to two dimensions, their enlargement and arrangement on the wall returns to the construction its original magnitude. Here, recomposition does not depend on a closed system defined by the number of exposures on a roll of film or the format and configuration of a contact sheet, but follows a purely visual logic. The photographs are arranged in such a way that the original images are reconstructed, with the lines continuing from one fragment to the next, and the perspective breaking and resuming from one fragment to the next. This network of visual resonances overflows the fixed border of the photographic paper, reconstructing the image in an extended pictorial space. The superimposition of prints mounted on cardboard adds depth to the construction, which in effect takes over the wall and makes it the true support of the image.

Just as *An afternoon on my balcony, Montreal, August 18, 1978* introduced new elements into Boogaerts' investigations and resolved them in a self-referential statement, the six *maquettes* (two of which were enlarged) of *Leaves–Traces* (1982) uses the analogy between leaves of photographic paper and the leaves of a tree to explore the literalness of the material of photography. In this cycle, Boogaerts breaks free from the rigidity of the photographic support and displays a group of unmounted prints cascading down the wall, to reconstruct an image of dead leaves or tracks in the snow. Superimpositions fluctuate with the chance undulations of the paper. Thus Boogaerts moves from the preceding works' rigorous recomposition in three dimensions to fluid assemblages that depend in part on the physical conditions in which they are exhibited.

By using photographic paper in its unaltered state, Boogaerts shows the literalness of the material, in sizes and colours standardized by the industry. He makes use of the thinness and fragility of the sheet of paper to reveal the

plasticity and malleability that allow the shaping of the photographic material. While each of the prints may constitute a two-dimensional, flattened fragment, rendering objects insubstantial, the play of superimpositions and visual connections across the undulations of the paper give a fluidity to the recomposition, which becomes an autonomous whole in which fragments conveying visual resonances are blended together.

It is interesting to note the significance of NASA astronauts' photographs of the Earth and the lunar surface among Boogaerts' references. These images, radically new for his generation, subvert classical perspective and call into question our world view by radically changing the position of the observer and therefore the point of view from which that observer determines his position in the universe. These reconnaissance photographs, gridded and numbered, function as a single image, each a numbered and inventoried independent fragment, and a component of a topographical study greater than the sum of its parts—a constructed and magnified view of a terra incognita.

Totality (1983–1990)

My work is a story of two stages. During the first stage I work on the arrangement, camera-angles being the first decisions. Framing—limitations, panoramas—enlargements. The second stage is "at the cutting-table," where I go over the decisions taken during the first stage; I either confirm or thwart them, either reinforcing them or moving on to something else. And why not? I study the arrangements again, looking at them through the frames. Looking at this gaze and the motives behind it, and keeping track of both gazes and the motive.

There are always two levels: the image inside each photographic rectangle, and the rectangle itself and what it produces in terms of film surface, perforations, numberings, markings, etc. I use everything, leaving nothing aside. Even those photographs which have a dual usage. Recycling. Working with all that photography is. I not only work with what we believe it reveals, but also with what it conceals.[8]

[8] Pierre Boogaerts, "An investigation of the photographic rectangle, the interior as with the exterior, and of my working methods. And with several detours along the way…," in *Anamnèse* (Montreal: Dazibao, 1989), pp. 70–71. Translated by Robert McGee.

The montages Boogaerts produced between 1983 and 1990 used the 35 mm slide format, cropped and recomposed in a negative copy from which a print was then made. By cutting up the slides, Boogaerts undermined the support and referencing of photographic representation. While in earlier works he extended the field of vision by panning through space and thus bypassing the limitations imposed on vision by the camera, here the opposite movement takes place: all the fragments are fused together by transparency in the photographic material in order to reconstruct the subject in a single image that is the sum total of all the photographic data at the artist's disposal.

This synthesis reveals both the imaginary nature of representation and the workings of the system that make it possible. The images bear marks integral to the photographic process: for example, the sprocket holes and numbers on the film. The montages explore the slides' transparency: while earlier works circumvented the frame by superimposing a series of prints, in this case the fragments on the transparent support merge by means of the light projected through it. Enlargement of these montages changes the scale of the subject, which becomes monumental and asserts its presence on the wall. The works also celebrate the beauty of the materials: vibrant colours stand out against a white ground; flowers, foliage, and reflections in water seem to be floating on large sheets of paper undulating on the wall.

Appealing to the literalness of photographic transcription and its particular way of reconstructing reality, these assemblages are the sum not only of all the photos taken of each subject, but also of all the scraps from the cropping required to recompose the image of that subject. The reconstructed picture space shows what we call reality to be nothing but a cultural construct that filters and organizes our perceptions and governs our actions. In this final series of works, Boogaerts clearly wished to incorporate all of photography, using photography. The image becomes a totality of fragments flowing into one another.

I have always tried not to impose one view of things, but on the contrary, to disappear as much as possible, more and more to allow the photographic view of things to appear as simply and effectively as possible.[9]

This totality, incorporating both the image and the traces of its fabrication, was both a fulfilment and a limitation. Unlike work that is governed by reason, the order and clarity of Boogaerts' work show the progress of a craftsman who, particularly in his last works, explored the plastic properties of the materials at his disposal. The consistency of his statements indicates the continuity of this process, which developed according to its own logic, the logic of analogy. In accordance with Boogaerts' intent to penetrate to the essential, his oeuvre is marked by spareness and simplicity, rather than rigour and formalism. And for Boogaerts, the essence was always the poetic intuition that alone makes it possible to see beyond the frameworks imposed on vision by culture, an essential process of increasing one's awareness in order to find a view that is not pure and detached, but one with the beauty and transparency of the things of this world.

[9] Pierre Boogaerts, conversation with the author, August 27, 1993.

Photography... what comes next?

Going beyond the limits, enlarging the frame. It is always the same challenge and the same attempt, of course. I was interested in representation very early. How do you represent things? How does the world represent itself? How does representation take the place of the world? How does it happen that our representations always depict our own selves?

The codes of drawing and painting soon seemed to me to be freighted with a history that was so vast, so ancient, that any representation of the contemporary world became weighted down with it, to the point that in my eyes it lost all simplicity. In this sense, photography seemed to me more appropriate for "being with" the world around me.

I was in my twenties. Pop Art and its inclusion of advertising language in the representation of the world, and also Conceptual Art and its incursions into areas seemingly very far from art, then Land Art and its direct inquiry into the relations between nature and culture: these were the paths I explored.

Photography brought everything together. But in time, it became clear that it was also a true node: everything was reflected in it. Society as a whole, the very act of looking. I was back to square one: photography ceaselessly referred me back to a way of looking in which I could recognize myself but which I had not wanted. I was still not "with" the world that surrounded me. The photograph, too, turned out to be so freighted that simplicity continued to elude me.

It was then that I had a crucial encounter. I met someone who gave me the tools I was seeking, the tools that could reveal the very construction of my own act of looking. I became his student. He is a grand master who teaches me Oriental energy techniques dating back thousands of years. Thanks to him and these techniques, I am finally approaching the present. Today there are no more paintbrushes, no more camera, not even any production of objects.

I go on. I try not to look at the world any more. I try to be present before I look. From time to time, perhaps.

Pierre Boogaerts, March 2001

Reproductions

Comments by Pierre Boogaerts

Published sources are indicated at the end of each excerpt by Pierre Boogaerts, with the name of the translator where applicable. Please refer to the bibliography for more complete references. Titles shown for the works are those of the artist.

The transition from painting to photography was very easy: it's a question of tools. At the beginning, I wanted to show the world what I saw. I wanted to make what I was doing, saying, and thinking as clear and comprehensible as possible. So I gradually eliminated whatever interfered with that clarity – drawing, brushstrokes, the grain of the canvas, and naturally I considered photography. That was something that went straight to the point: I looked at the tree, I took a photograph, I showed the photograph, you saw the tree.

Interview with Pierre Dessureault, 27 August 1995.

1 "Large Crater": "Arch" (6 x 1 clouds), "Large Irrigation" (2 strips of transparent plastic unrolled on the embankment along a highway under construction), "Small Irrigation" (half of the large version), Brussels 1972

8 silver prints (7: 14.5 x 10.2 cm; 1: 3.1 x 12.7 cm), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 45 x 62.5 cm
1972 Brussels [1972:7]

2 10 metres of transparent plastic on flowers (Version c)

2 silver prints (20.3 x 29.7 cm), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 50 x 65 cm
1972 Brussels [1972:5]

3 Transparent Plexiglas strip placed in the grass (formation of dew and imprint of the strip)

4 silver prints (19 x 26 cm), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 50 x 65 cm
1972 Brussels [1972:3]

My *work* in photography consists essentially of "shifting" or "distorting" the givens or properties of the medium. By thwarting and contradicting those properties, I emphasize them, on the one hand, and on the other hand, by using simple images of our environment, I draw a parallel with our society, with us, with me.

From "A Few Rough Notes About My Work," in *Coins de rues (Pyramides)–N.Y. 1978/79–Street Corners (Pyramids)*, 1980.

4 On the ground in the air I – On the ground in the air II (Version b)

10 silver prints (3: 29.9 x 24 cm; 7: 13.6 x 10.2 cm), 2 texts, mounted on foam core
Overall dimensions: 70 x 100 cm
1974 Montreal [1974:7]

The area that interests me and that I explore is located BETWEEN the notions of synthetic and natural. For me, it is not a question of demystifying them or separating them, but of considering the natural and the synthetic as ingredients of a single mixture.

Making them of SIMILAR NATURE ("all constituents of a homogeneous substance are of similar nature" – Larousse). Developing the synthetic as being natural and organic, and developing the natural as being synthetic.

Making them receptive to one another.

Using one in place of the other.

Wandering between these two components and blending them.

More specifically, merging them.

Never separating them, but recognizing each in the other.

Revealing the organic in the synthetic and the inorganic in the natural. In an attitude that should not be tragic (any more).

In which relations (confusions) happen "naturally" (cool) and flexibly (swing).

Finally, showing the human scale of nature and revealing the natural scale of man.

(continues on page 34)

5 **References / Yellow Banana Tree Plantation**
Bic Banana
Reference information

3 chromogenic prints (1: 12.7 x 17.7 cm; 1: 12.1 x 8.9 cm; 1: 7.2 x 4 cm) and reference text, mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 50 x 65 cm
1974–75 Montreal–Brussels [1974:4]

6 **References / Yellow Banana Tree Plantation**
Bic Banana
Reference information

9 chromogenic prints (7: 12.3 x 8.9 cm; 2: 17.5 x 11.9 cm), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 50 x 65 cm
1975 Montreal [1975:1]

7 **References / Yellow Banana Tree Plantation**
Highway lighting pole (straight), yellow as identification, No. 2

1 silver print (49.6 x 39.6 cm), mounted on cardboard, yellow ink
Overall dimensions: 50 x 65 cm
1972 Brussels [1972:9]

8 **References / Yellow Banana Tree Plantation**
Highway lighting pole (straight), yellow as identification, No. 5

1 silver print (49.6 x 39.6 cm), mounted on cardboard, yellow ink
Overall dimensions: 50 x 65 cm
1972 Brussels [1972:12]

9 **References / Yellow Banana Tree Plantation**
Self-portrait as a banana tree, yellow as reference information, No. 3

1 silver print (40 x 50 cm), mounted on cardboard, yellow ink
Overall dimensions: 50 x 85.5 cm
1972 Brussels [1972:15]

Seeing my effect in the "synthetic-human" as well as in the "natural-human."

The works presented here are all accompanied by a reference: plantation and yellow banana tree. The meaning of plantation is simple: it presupposes verticality and potential repetition (multiplicity). Yellow banana tree, however, does not here imply bananas or banana trees and has nothing to do with the "natural reality" of such a fruit or such a tree.

I am simply indicating an image.

Banana tree refers to the image of the tree – nature, verticality, sprouting; the image of the banana tree – exoticism, a different, freer place; and yellow – light, warmth, and a certain type of space.

The reference is not to the natural image of the banana tree, but rather to a mental image (collective consciousness) – I would call it a "synthetic" image.

From "références / plantation jaune-bananier," *Parachute*, 1975.

10 References/Yellow Banana Tree Plantation
Outdoor lighting poles

3 silver prints (35.6 x 28 cm), 3 chromogenic prints (8.9 x 12.5 cm), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 70 x 100 cm
1974 Montreal [1974:2]

11 References/Yellow Banana Tree Plantation
1 – Highway lighting pole (curved) 1234 branches 73/74
2 – Reflections in the photographs before mounting (reference information)

5 silver prints (4: 24 x 30 cm; 1: 11.5 x 30 cm), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 76.2 x 101.5 cm
Brussels [1975:6]

12 References/Yellow Banana Tree Plantation
1 – 36 photos of yellow circles on Highway 401 between Windsor and London, Ontario, Canada. Canada 1974
2 – "Banana Tree Plantation" – Pattern of yellow circles painted on a road – Brussels 1972

40 chromogenic prints (36: 11.9 x 9.9 cm; 1: 9 x 12.6 cm; 1: 8.6 x 12.6 cm; 1: 12.7 x 9 cm; 1: 8.9 x 13 cm), 1 silver print (35.2 x 2.6 cm), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 70 x 100 cm
1 – 1974 Canada
2 – 1972 Brussels [1972:18]

13 References/Yellow Banana Tree Plantation: Bic Banana – colourized

9 photocopies, marker, 1 chromogenic print (5 x 10 cm), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 74 x 55.8 cm
1975 Montreal [1975:7]

That the way we see is the result of a way of thinking, that thought is closely related to vision, that there is an interrelation: that we see as we think and think as we see, that we have to think to see and that we see only what we think – all this is becoming increasingly obvious at present. This means that our way of looking is always the result of a certain organization of the real world, and that looking *constructs reality in accordance with its own point of view.*

Language, science, the arts, and technology are different approaches to reality. But in being such particular ways of perceiving, they allow us to perceive only a particular reality. Thus society, by the very act of developing the conditions for its own knowledge, develops the limits of its perception. It is these very instruments that blind us to other aspects of reality.

... For when we photograph today, *we are putting into effect concepts that date back several centuries.* When we activate the shutter release, we are not satisfied with selecting a fraction of time and space: the photographic view also implies concepts that predate the camera itself, which will imprint themselves on the photograph just as much if not more. In talking about these concepts, I am not placing myself outside the field of photography; on the contrary, I am speaking about *the conditions for creation of* and *with this medium.*

From "Perspective, photographie et 'encadrement,'" *Parachute,* 1983.

"Synthetization" of the Sky, 1973–75
1975 Montreal

14 **First Part (detail): Making the pattern of the clouds geometrical, No. 5 (gathering) Ontario 1973/75**

Chromogenic print (35.5 x 28 cm) EX 84-371-C

15 **Second Part (detail): Making the shape of the clouds geometrical, No. 3 Montreal 1973/75**

Chromogenic print (35.5 x 28 cm) EX 84-375-C

16 **Third Part (detail): Making time geometrical, No. 3 (morning/afternoon) Montreal 1973/75**

Chromogenic print (35.5 x 28 cm) EX 84-380-C

17 **Fifth Part: Making the components – blue sky and cloud – geometrical (by ascribing to them an equal weight), No. 1 and No. 2 Montreal 1973/75**

Chromogenic print (35.5 x 83 cm) EX 84-384-C

18 **Reference Photographs (Inside/Outside Views) 1973/75**

Chromogenic prints, mounted on cardboard (35.6 x 27.7 cm) EX 84-387-C

... I try to work with the *totality* of the photographic image, not merely with what it reveals but also with what it conceals. I work with the image within the photographic rectangle, with the image of this rectangle and with all that it produces. Using both what is in the interior and what is on the exterior does not mean working on two different "tableaux". On the contrary, it is to reunite what is an inseparable whole; only then does the process of photographic vision begin to become evident. Everything must be used and nothing discarded, even redundant photos. Recycling everything from mistakes to old beliefs. Then it becomes possible to look at this gaze, to outwit stockpiles and juxtapositions, to outfox the eternal stagnation of the catalogue and enumeration (something we are very fond of lately). The machine is there, repeating itself endlessly in an illusion of multiple gazes...

From "Current photographic usage..." in
Pierre Boogaerts – Photographical Works – 1984 / 89, 1990.
Translated by Robert McGee.

New York, N.Y.

1976–77 New York [1976:1]

19 **First Part: Streets (Outside) – Park Avenue (1)**
20 photographs (in the order they were taken) taken while walking along Park Avenue between 47th Street and 53rd Street on September 29, 1976
20 chromogenic prints (27.5 x 35.5 cm), mounted on aluminum

20 **First Part: Streets (Outside) – Park Avenue (2B)**
20 photographs (in the order they were taken) taken while walking along Park Avenue between 52nd Street and 60th Street on May 19, 1977
20 chromogenic prints (27.5 x 35.5 cm), mounted on aluminum

21 **First Part: Streets (Outside) – West Broadway**
20 photographs (in the order they were taken) taken while walking along West Broadway between Houston Street and Broome Street on May 16, 1977
20 chromogenic prints (27.5 x 35.5 cm), mounted on aluminum

22 **Second Part: Studios (Inside) Detail 2: John Cage's Apartment**
Chromogenic print (40.5 x 50.7 cm), mounted on aluminum

23 **Third part: Reference (Interference) Detail 3**
Chromogenic print (45 x 55 cm)

Blue Cars and Sky above Each of Them, New York / Montreal – 1977/79

1977–1979 New York and Montreal [1977:1]

25 pairs of chromogenic prints (51 x 61 cm each), mounted on fibre panels

24 Detail 4

25 Detail 14

26 Detail 17

If the camera is fitted with round-shaped lenses, it is to better "box" the world, and photography – because of its figuration – insists upon such a planetary pretension (a world captured, revealed, disclosed ...). However, every photograph displays its angular – square or rectangular – planes through its framing process (space and time). It is but too often forgotten that those images are the result of a Caesarean section. With the razor cut, everything ends – time and infinity; everything gets slight – weight and depth. Thus, behind the round-shaped lens, everything flattens out before a unique objective, that is, to outline the shapeless and elusive – therefore dangerous – reality of our world. Therefore, the camera distorts the polymorphic world, shaping it in its likeness. Far from duplicating the world, a photograph is rather an image of *rationalization*. It is the image of our Occidental society.

The camera and its images, or similarly the city and its architecture, our ideas and work: all that we build screens us from the world. These screens have distinctive forms but all shape us and the world.

... In all four works of the "Screen Series", the sky is shaped by the architecture of the city. I was taken with the formal resemblance between the architecture of New York (archetype of the Occidental city and art centre) and the sky as seen from its streets. And I could not disregard the similarity between the effects of the architecture upon the sky and those of the camera upon our reality.

In fact, whether it be architecture or the camera (our technology and, finally, our society), both are *forceful*: the camera takes reality and ourselves through its "vision", just as the city reorganizes this reality according to its plans. It is therefore a power based on violence, the violence of a reducing and, consequently, mutilitating vision (or thought), characteristic of any totalitarian system. And if, in certain photographs, buildings turn upside down, it may be less the result of a photographic inversion than the consequence of this vision, industrial and military (can we possibly dissociate these two notions?), that is inherent to this normalizing *machine*.

From *Pierre Boogaerts. Screen Series*, 1982. Translated by Marie-France Bruyère.

27 Screen Series: 2 Photographs Taken from My Window 1976 (Version b)

2 chromogenic prints (27.8 x 35.4 cm), mounted on aluminum
1976 Montreal [1976:7]

Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y. 1978/79 (Version d) 1978 New York [1978:11]

28 Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y. 1978/79 – 25th Street

8 chromogenic prints (6: 39 x 59.5 cm; 2: 45 x 59.5 cm), individually mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 326 x 70.1 cm (approx.)

29 Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y. 1978/79 – 29th Street

9 chromogenic prints (7: 39.5 x 60.5 cm; 2: 45 x 60.5 cm), individually mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 324 x 117 cm

30 Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y. 1978/79 – 36th Street

8 chromogenic prints (6: 39.5 x 60 cm; 2: 45 x 60 cm), individually mounted on fibre panel
Overall dimensions: 320 x 71 cm

31 Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y. 1978/79 – Pearl Street and Cedar Street

7 chromogenic prints (6: 40.5 x 61 cm; 1: 40.5 x 57 cm), individually mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 299 x 164 cm

32 Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y. 1978/79 – 7th Avenue and 37th Street

11 chromogenic prints (45 x 60 cm), individually mounted on fibre panel
Overall dimensions: 299 x 164 cm

33 Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y. 1978/79 – William Street and John Street

9 chromogenic prints (40.5 x 61 cm), individually mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 262 x 228 cm

The similarities between the photo-image and the mirror-image, between the photo-fragment and the screen-window, and also the equivalence of the building and the city with the pyramid, all function in the same sense, as do, of course, the sky and the colour blue. To recognize ancient civilisations (the pyramid) and future ones (the buildings, freed from gravity like spaceships; the dark blue of the cosmos) in the present (street corner in New York, gallery wall). To become conscious of the breathtaking coexistence of the infinitely far and the very close…

"The cradle of the past and the grave of the future meet in the curve of the present"… a sentence recalled from memory from *The Blood of Hussain*, a film by Jamil Dehlavi, seen by chance.

Through individuality we rejoin a globality: man in the universe. Rediscovering space and the universe through certain aerial/aqueous qualities of the vision (framing) and of time, thus regaining, along with the viewer, the freedom which is also my dependency, and it is at every level of my work.

From "A Few Rough Notes About My Work," in *Coins de rues (Pyramides)–N.Y. 1978/79–Street Corners (Pyramids)*, 1980.

34 Large Irrigation – Preparatory Work for Vertical Skies

1 silver print (12.8 x 3.1 cm), 1 chromogenic print (4.0 x 5.5 cm), 1 strip of contact prints, mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 28 x 35.5 cm
1976 New York and Montreal [1976:10]

35 Camera World – Sleight of Hand

17 chromogenic prints (12.5 x 19.5 cm), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 76 x 101.6 cm
1979 New York [1979:15]

36 Camera World – Sleight of Hand

6 chromogenic prints (19.5 x 12.5 cm), 1 silver print (9.5 x 10.5 cm), and 2 postcards, mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 76 x 101.6 cm
1979 New York [1979:16]

37 Life Size (or the Nature of the Media), Window in Winter, 1978
Screens-Windows/Windows-Screens

13 chromogenic prints (12: 25 x 31 cm; 1: 27 x 35 cm), mounted on foam core
Overall dimensions: 145.5 x 110.5 cm
1978 Montreal [not numbered]

Above all, not telling a story whose beginning, middle and end I know; above all, not popularizing a book.

Instead, starting out without a specific purpose, attracted by light and shadow, by the contrast. Picking up the camera, some leftover black-and-white film, and just starting the process of RECORDING almost without realizing it. It was afternoon, it was a beautiful day, and I was on my balcony.

The camera, not wanting to convey feelings or explain reasoning, just following closely whatever was happening.

Superficiality gradually giving way to something more personal, slowly, almost without my realizing it, and the camera recording this shift. Through the photographs, remembering, maintaining the chronology, rediscovering the links while laying out the photographs.

From *Une après-midi sur mon balcon, Montréal, 18 août 1978*, 1979.

An afternoon on my balcony, Montreal, August 18, 1978

56 silver prints, mounted on 16 panels
16 prints, 28 x 35 cm, on 4 panels, 28 x 142 cm
24 prints, 38 x 51 cm, on 6 panels, 76 x 101 cm
12 prints, 38 x 50 cm, on 2 panels, 76 x 152 cm
4 prints, 76 x 106 cm, on 4 panels, 76 x 106 cm
Overall dimensions: 122 x 1342 cm
1978 Montreal

38 (Details – Photographs 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

6 silver prints (37.9 x 50.6 cm each), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 75.7 x 152.2 cm
EX 79-472 to EX 79-477

39 (Details – Photographs 13, 14, 15, 16)

4 silver prints (27.9 x 35.4 cm each), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 27.9 x 141.5 cm
EX 79-507 to EX 79-510

40 (Details – Photographs 23, 24, 25, 26)

4 silver prints (37.9 x 50.6 each), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 75.7 x 101.4 cm
EX 79-491 to EX 79-494

41 (Detail – Photograph 33)

1 silver print (76.2 x 106.5 cm), mounted on cardboard
EX 79-502

42 (Details – Photographs 33 , 34, 35, 36)

4 silver prints (37.9 x 50.6 cm each), mounted on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 76 x 101.4 cm
EX 79-503 to EX 79-506

To the *subtractive process* (taking a photograph, a fragment of a whole) I add an *additive process*: the group of photographs and the series.

To change the viewing angle is to modify the frontiers of looking. Chance (or aberration) and the exclusiveness of framing (or the fragility of a prejudice) modify the frontiers of vision (or the parochiality of our territory).

The logic of working with photography is the logic of framing. If one photograph refers to its borders, several photographs, as well as enlarging their respective frames of view, refer to their respective borders. The sum total of these borders will determine the shape of a piece. The sum total of these pieces will determine the shape of the work.

This multiplication of images, each of them limited but at the same time working in a larger context, reminds me of the division of cells.

A photograph is a fragment, photographs are fragments; a piece is the passage from one to several, from the individual to the group. Working with photography is therefore working at the level of connections, joints (in any event, it's a world in pieces ...).

(continues on page 48)

Street Corners (Pyramids) – N.Y. 1978/79
1978–1979 New York [1979:7]

43 Part 1 – Corner of Vanderbilt Ave. and 42nd St., N.Y. – February 10, 1979
1 chromogenic print (50.4 x 60.5 cm), with label

44 Part 2 – Corner of Park Ave. and 52nd St., N.Y. – March 15, 1979
2 chromogenic prints (1: 46 x 61 cm; 1: 40 x 61 cm)
Overall dimensions: 62 x 86.5 cm

45 Part 4 – Corner of Rockefeller Plaza and 49th St., N.Y. – March 18, 1979
4 chromogenic prints (1: 45 x 60 cm; 3: 40 x 60 cm), with labels
Overall dimensions: 165 x 68 cm (approx.)

46 Part 5 – Corner of 5th Ave. and 28th St., N.Y. – March 12, 1979
3 chromogenic prints (1: 45.5 x 60.8 cm; 2: 40.8 x 60.8 cm), with labels
Overall dimensions: 45 x 183 cm (approx.)

47 Part 6 – Corner of Old Slip and Water St., N.Y. – March 20, 1979
5 chromogenic prints (40 x 60 cm)
Overall dimensions: 209 x 70 cm

48 Part 7b – Corner of William St. and Pine St., N.Y. – March 17, 1979
5 chromogenic prints (1: 46 x 61 cm; 4: 41 x 61 cm)
Overall dimensions: 128 x 175 cm

49 Part 7b – Corner of Lexington Ave. and 42nd St., N.Y. – April 18, 1979
5 chromogenic prints (40 x 60 cm)
Overall dimensions: 139 x 124 cm

50 Part 7c – Corner of 1st Ave. and 35th St., N.Y. – April 11, 1979
6 chromogenic prints (1: 46 x 60.8 cm; 5: 40.5 x 60.8 cm)
Overall dimensions: 178 x 135 cm

The group of photographs – a succession of screens – opens, in the end, on the physical presence of the wall and the importance of that wall depends on whether it points out screens that are beyond photography: the screen of the wall on the landscape, of the gallery on art; of art on life; the screens of education, ideas, personality...

Life lines – Sight lines

The piece is a knot which entertwines two visions: in one, the purpose is to see as well as we can (as much), to broaden our field of vision; in the second, the purpose is to hide, to insist on the partial aspect of vision.

From "A Few Rough Notes About My Work," in *Coins de rues (Pyramides) – N.Y. 1978/79 – Street Corners (Pyramids)*, 1980.

51 Part 7c – Corner of Lexington Ave. and 50th St., N.Y. – March 19, 1979
6 chromogenic prints (1: 46 x 61 cm, 5: 41 x 61 cm)
Overall dimensions: 159 x 122 cm

52 Part 7c – Corner of Nassau St. and Maiden Lane, N.Y. – May 5, 1979
9 chromogenic prints (1: 45.3 x 60.8 cm; 8: 40.6 x 60.7 cm)
Overall dimensions : 125 x 184 cm

53 Part 9 – Corner of 1st Ave. and 39th St., N.Y. – April 11, 1979
14 chromogenic prints (3: 45.5 x 61 cm; 11: 40.5 x 61 cm)
Overall dimensions: 183 x 208 cm

54 Part 10 – Corner of 1st Ave. and 35th St., N.Y. – April 11, 1979
9 chromogenic prints (40 x 60.6 cm)
Overall dimensions: 316 x 195 cm

Getting to the margin. Getting to the starting line. Playing.

Playing with the camera, with its power, my power. Letting its qualities, my qualities, come into play. Finally, giving some play to its (my) frame, making it more supple.

Leaving the leaves/sheets some play so that reality doesn't come off again (like the corner of a Kodak advertisement), but takes off.

Looking. Looking at the look that deflects and turns away my look.

Situating myself. Situating my look and its look, using my meandering to situate my method. Walking, producing traces, footprints. With my body, with the camera. Traces of traces. Parallelism and decentring.

Decentring from one imprint to another, from one rectangle to another. Looking repeatedly, finding again the chance occurrence of prints or leaves on the ground, and circumventing repetition by cooperation. Circumventing closure and the single rectangle by remaining open to the other rectangles, and at the end of the line, the end of the work, achieving the organic form that will dis-organize the system of order imposed at the outset by the camera.

Traces or leaves, inside or outside, showing or concealing, superimposing or erasing: perverting the system, falsifying its meaning by giving the greatest possible number of meanings to it – to that which knows only one meaning. Not blending or merging myself with its system, not pouring myself into it, not shaping myself to fit its fixed ideas. But confounding it by rediscovering it, not fragments but linkages, not accumulation but density, not stability but rhythm, not order but an organic whole, not reduction but true grandeur, not domination but participation, etc.

From "À propos de 'Feuilles I et II, 1981–82,'" in *Repères: Art actuel du Québec/Quebec Art Now*, 1982.

55 Leaves – Traces 1

37 chromogenic prints (51 x 61 cm), mounted on cardboard, braced with aluminum strips on the back
Overall dimensions: 465 x 225 cm
1982 Montreal [1982:2]

In the case of the photograph, this does not take into account one thing – the image, and one aspect – the interior of the rectangle. When it is referred to, it is only to connect it to the image within. We speak of framings, compositions, and even cuttings, but never address the exterior. Never what is missing from the image, what connects the rectangle to the exterior or, quite simply, to the film, the mechanism or the tooled gaze of the lenses. All we see is the interior of the frame. We are content with seeing what someone wants to show us. Perhaps we feel we can escape the confines of the frame by considering the state of the artist's soul… It's as if the word "screen" had only one meaning! Oh, the comfort of frames…

To move back a bit so as to see better; a bit more, because we have strayed from reality in order to photograph. To get some distance so as to perceive not the reality of the world but the reality of its perspective, incorporating the photographic image with what it has made appear, what made it appear in terms of the gaze. And then a new image appears, an image concealed by the photographic image.

This is the nature of my work.

To use the photographic image *in its entirety*. To use the image *inside* the frame as well as the image forming the frame, what it is formed of. That which gives it a form.

I use what is usually considered as the results, the avowed aim of photography: the image. With all of its light, its perspective, its texture, its bi-dimensionality, and so on. I use everything that has brought close – or distanced – photography and painting: the relationship with Plato's cave, the bright room, the index… Everything that we would like to see installed under the heading of "Art", alongside painting, sculpture, video, video-clips (yes, indeed), interactive multi-media (*sic*, I swear to you!)… I shall stop as I am straying from my subject.

(continues on page 54)

56 Safe Film

1 chromogenic print
Overall dimensions: 80 x 97.5 cm
1983 Montreal [1983:1]

57 Dieffenbachia

1 chromogenic print, mounted on canvas
Overall dimensions: 101 x 230 cm
1985 Montreal EX 90-34-C

58 Montreal at Night with Fire

3 chromogenic prints
(2: 77.7 x 101.2 cm; 1: 78.1 x 101.2 cm)
Overall dimensions: 219 x 101 cm
1985 Montreal [1985:12]

59 Parrot Tulip

1 chromogenic print
Overall dimensions: 85.4 x 106.5 cm
1986 Montreal [1986:2]

60 Crinum Flowers II

1 chromogenic print
Overall dimensions: 87.5 x 123. 3 cm
1985 Montreal [1985:5]

61 Tree 3

1 chromogenic print
Overall dimensions: 101.2 x 176.8 cm
1985 Montreal [1985:10]

Therefore, my work is concerned with using the photographic image. But it also includes what is normally considered superfluous and never shown: the photographic mechanism that makes a photo a *vision*, and not a reflection of reality. All this is inscribed on the film – on an equal footing with the image we are used to seeing. In my case, this is what I consider to be of real importance in photography: the mechanical development of a photographic vision that would give the photograph its undivided – historical and plastic – attention.

Using at once the inside and the outside does not mean working on two separate "tableaux". On the contrary, it is to reunite what makes up an inseparable whole, where only the process of vision begins to become evident. It is no longer a question of neutrality, but conversely of something appearing to assume a form. No longer a question of fastening onto the artist's small or large ego but of being swept away in the much larger and stronger current of a societal vision. No longer a question of…

There it is. Using these two aspects, these two images. That is my work.

From "An Investigation of the Photographic Rectangle, Interior and Exterior, and of My Working Methods, with Several Detours Along the Way…," in *Anamnèse*, 1989. Translation by Robert McGee.

62 Lily – 1986–88

3 chromogenic prints (234.3 x 102.5 cm; 240 x 102.3 cm; 235.5 x 102.3 cm)
Overall dimensions: 246 x 294 cm
1988 Montreal EX 90-30-C

63 Leaves on the Water – 1988–89

3 chromogenic prints (238.6 x 102.6 cm; 237.8 x 103.7 cm; 238 x 102.6 cm)
Overall dimensions: 245 x 294 cm
1989 Montreal [1989:1]

Camera Series: The 26-02-79 Eclipse / Light and shadow, positive and negative / The light that blinds, the shadow that enlightens / (reflection on a black surface) / Closing your eyes and finally seeing… / Letting the specks of dust make the conditions of the mechanics appear… and realizing that these little marks make us dream!

The black hole that makes sight possible – the screen that eclipses the light.

Something close but at the same time kept at a distance – close proximity and great distance at the same time.

Below and above, always the same verticality…

Balance and falling at the same time.

As far as we extend our sight, all we ever discover are the conditions of our vision.

The universe doesn't explain itself, since we give it our form. It contemplates itself. And the halo of glory around technology is only a replica of the halo of religion.

The same fascination, the same veneration. Could it be Lourdes?

Handwritten inscription on the maquette *Click-Eclipse*

64 Click-Eclipse

Montage of 4 printed documents and 11 silver prints
in different formats, on cardboard
Overall dimensions: 78.6 x 104 cm
1979–1986 Montreal [1986:4]
Note: The 8 photographs at the top are taken from
Camera Series: The 2–26–1979 Eclipse–New York City

I would like to talk about the blindness of vision, the blindness of the photograph, the blindness of the image. I would like to talk about a phenomenon of reversal or inversion; bringing the gaze and an eclipse closer together.

Take sight. The Eye. At the centre: a black hole. Light rays *penetrate* it and sensitize the back of the eye.

Take an eclipse. The moon hides the sun. At the centre: a black hole. Light rays *deviate* and strike a screen, revealing it.

Take things, objects, the world. Light rays touch them. What do we see? Only the rays that *bounce off*, those that do not penetrate the object. We never see anything except what objects reject or send back. We never see anything except a kind of negative, a kind of wrong side.

Take an image. It is a reproduction of the world, that is, a construction based on certain data intended to produce what we want to show or want to see. To achieve this, we must eliminate, prune, cut, select out of a whole we call reality – which we do not see – so as to retain what we have chosen to see or show. What we show, therefore, is initially this process of reversal, this affront to the wholeness of reality, this sacrifice of the all for … a mere nothing. And this mere nothing is first of all a culture. The data intended to produce what we want to show or want to see is that culture. The screen revealed when light rays deviate is that culture. So is the black hole. That culture is what we see everywhere. It is what we see first. Culture makes us think it is everything, when it is only a wrong side, a little piece of negative, a small, arbitrary selection, a set of a priori assumptions: a mere nothing, in fact.

From "Clic-éclipse : voir et croire, lumière et aveuglement ou encore : la photographie comme modèle des arts, des idées et des a priori," *Parachute*, 1990.

Michel Denée

Myth in Mourning

De ce que l'on me cache dépend ce que je peux voir
De ce que je ne vois pas dépend ce que je vois
De ce que je cache dépend ce que je montre
Dans le processus même de montrer, il y a celui de cacher
Cadre de vie – Cadre de vue. Pierre Boogaerts

"What I can see depends on what is being hidden from me
What I see depends on what I cannot see.
What I show depends on what I hide.
In the very process of showing is contained the opposite process of hiding
Life lines – Sight lines"

To the academic sensibility, Pierre Boogaerts' oeuvre might seem to be a thoroughgoing indictment and deconstruction of photographic logo-centrism.

In a more lyrical and, I admit, very subjective vein, I am inclined to see in his works the signs of a particular destiny. What I find in them is primarily the unfolding of a personal drama that parallels a gradual realization of the decline and eventual impossibility of mythic expression in a world exhausted by the media.

For Pierre Boogaerts, photography seems to have been first an aesthetic belief, then a contradiction to deal with, and finally a rite of passage. "Photography fascinates and repels me at the same time," he confessed in the catalogue for *Street Corners (Pyramids)—N.Y. 1978/79*. He would have to live out this ambivalence to the bitter end, experiencing the same sense of defeat Mallarmé felt. His artistic path would repeat Malevich's: from sublime supremacist to forced landing in the wasteland. Boogaerts had little doubt that *Black Square on White Background* was a trauma inflicted on painting by the obscure workings of the photographic negative. And a black rectangle eventually marked the conclusion of Boogaerts' own odyssey through media space.

Once he had left the landscape of Europe, he became fascinated by the mirages of the American city, the very incarnation of triumphant modernism. From here he launched pyramids, interstellar spaceships, then made a rough landing in the countryside, lighting it up with a quiverful of iconic lightning bolts. The visionary aspect of his flight and subsequent fall to earth was always tempered by mischievous tricks and shades of irony. He would need them.

After various efforts to illustrate myths by synthesized images intended to link nature and culture, Boogaerts came up against a wall impossible to scale, a death instinct. He gradually discovered that photographs not only rob nature of its generative power, but in every instance replace it with the totalitarian anti-myth of their technocratic vision. "The massage is the message," said

Marshall McLuhan. In the "massage" of photography, the message is Medusa's petrifying gaze.

Battling shadow and light, Boogaerts' entire oeuvre was an attempt to naturalize photography by poetic analogy, by the weight of assemblage, and finally by restructuring of the film itself. It was wasted effort: he only scratched the surface; the machines left only bits and pieces. So Boogaerts chose silence.

This perpetual state of doubt marked a rigorous journey for Boogaerts during those final twenty years. The Pop aesthetic, minimalism, suppression of the pictorial, and even the suppression of the sacred followed one another in images haunted by the loss of the mythic and of its fleshly and spiritual contact with the mystery of appearances.

As early as Boogaerts' first photographic works, the relation to nature and the attempt at a mythic dialogue were central. The dialectic between top and bottom, earth and sky, continually re-emerged. It shattered the haughty verticality of New York with its earthly details, and after Boogaerts' ascent of urban pyramids, he fell back to earth amid the scattered twigs, flowers, and ponds of his last works. I view this juxtaposition of high and low as a denunciation of the loss of the centre, the source of the identity of opposites. The machine, the camera itself, blotted out that place with the blinding brightness of its lenses, projectors, and mass production.

Let us put aside for a moment the highs and lows in which Icarus soars and falls; Boogaerts started by battling the Minotaur in the labyrinth of New York.

The Test of the Labyrinth

Screen Series: Street Skies and *Street Corners (Pyramids)* represent a veritable leap into a blue and black void, photography playing hide-and-seek with its other, mythical side, with shadow and light, in the labyrinth of New York.

The totem-pole-like elevations of the photos deployed on the wall are spectacular. New York seems to have been waiting forever for this azure-hued mandorla. The diaphragm of the lens finds an echo in the opening and shutting of the canyons of New York; the framing of the photos is echoed in the street grid and the latticework of skyscrapers. Capitalism triumphant has found its ultimate temple: the lens of the camera. It is impossible not to think of the nave of a Gothic cathedral, or indeed the transept, when Boogaerts has reinvented the process by using a street crossing as his vantage point.

But the fascination did not last; Boogaerts soon became ironic and derisive. The same openings in the firmament reminded him of the negative silhouette of missiles or atomic submarines. The same crosses became reminders of death machines out of *Star Wars*, of a plan for universal war imagined by some of the Constructivists, or even satellites launched into an orbit defined by the blind power of money. He saw this aesthetic deployment as a perverse alliance between technology and the sacred, which spoke of a fearsome pact between the camera and the world of phenomena: a sublime that is only subliminal and destroys the true sublime. This perversion of the aura would henceforth trouble and obsess him.

In the end, the cardboard constructions are a poisoned panegyric to New York, and to photography. The heroic spires are already ruins as they are erected, decomposing in the ether, like Boogaerts' photos, which would sooner or later fade in the light.

Writing the Lightning

Next came a transitory series (*Leaves*) that retained the monumentality of the previous work and determined the motifs of the next. It marked the passage from a minimal, inorganic approach to one that was complex, organic, and far less orderly. This later style belonged to him alone.

Using film itself, Boogaerts created a unique synthesis of photography, engraving, and calligraphy. To my mind, this stage represents his most original contribution to the history of photography. Boogaerts found his best response not in his investigation of skyscrapers or experimentation with monumentality, but in the concentration of the engraver bent over his workbench, incising a sign or original ideogram into his transparent medium.

As the photomontages of New York evoke the broken mirror of analytic cubism, so this series is reminiscent of the closely woven mesh of synthetic cubism.

Through the process of incising and cutting out, the constructions of New York were taken apart and miniaturized. The pyramid was interiorized and splintered to become an asymmetrical expansion, the graphic equivalent of lightning. These lightning bolts amputated the lens's ideal image and rebuilt it as equivalent energy. I would venture to call it transfiguration, not by photography, but of photography and by a kind of inspired chaos. Black and white constellations sparkle around the blinding sun of the lens. These works are true icons, even if illuminated only with paltry flashes of light. Boogaerts' quest for the synthesized image that would unite nature and culture, a true totemic substitute, finds its finest expression here. His principal motifs are the mirror of a pond, the delicate flesh of flowers, the transparency of foliage. A moisture-laden sky or hazy sun manages occasionally to cause a reflection in this primordial soup. Once again the problem of reflection comes into play, this time streaked by the ripples and perforations of the film. Elsewhere, these same holes are aligned to good effect with the eye-like spots of foliage. Here, the solitude of a bare tree is emphasized by splinters of film cut with the sharpness of a line of calligraphy. The cruelty of the slashes takes on a ritual value when they cut and scar a petal or corolla. All around, pieces of waste film vibrate like the stridulation of insects' wings.

Each work constitutes a poem in figurative verse, scanned by the notes of the perforations, the caesura of the incisions, and the abstraction of forms. This time, Narcissus must have been contemplating the cracks in his own skull. These works were of course influenced by collage, cubism, and serial art, but Boogaerts' intent was to deal with the discontinuity in modern syntax through the photograph and within the photograph, which he believed to be the primary cause and motive force of a schizophrenic aesthetic.

The poetry and visual rhymes of this final series, despite their formal success, still represented an inherent drama, a desperate attempt, one last time, to make photography a part of the natural world through the gestures of the engraver and the calligrapher. In the end, despite this skilled inlaying, the chemical glaze of mass reproduction still overwrote the final image, turning it into a clone lost in the anonymity of the mass media. Medusa's eye cannot even be scratched. The more it is attacked, the more it multiplies. What recourse is there over the abyss of the infinitesimal which is photography? What can be done in the face of the black hole presented by the camera lens?

Last Light Before Eclipse

The final panel recapitulates the great enigma of photography, the inherent contradiction voluntarily confronted by Boogaerts / Icarus. The documents and photographs from this last work had been selected long before and in a way had accompanied his work all along. Some of these photographs were used as illustrations for his last article in the magazine *Parachute*.

Five images show the progress of a solar eclipse broadcast on television. At the bottom of these images, synchronized with the stages of the eclipse, we can see the lens cap gradually covering the lens. The final image is the black-on-black photograph by the covered camera. Three other photos add more

details: a dilated pupil; the black disc of the solar eclipse, surrounded by a pale halo; and finally a white spot on a black ground – a galactic cluster. From microcosm to macrocosm, the identical (and interchangeable) dead end of the negative-and-positive duality of the photograph. Echoing the eclipses are the aura surrounding a space shuttle during a night launch, then two snapshots of the lens cap, one reflecting the viewfinder of the camera that is photographing it.

The most relevant explanation of this work, outside of the article, is provided by two inscriptions scratched in pencil under the photo of the final stage of the eclipse: "The light that blinds, the shadow that enlightens ... Closing your eyes and finally seeing ..." This is the contradiction inherent in the click of the camera shutter and the closing of an eyelid: they both conceal and express the poles of the infinite. Ask this sphinx a question and he sends us back to ourselves, questioning the relevance of all questions. We are on the threshold of silence, which is also the threshold of myth and of the truly sacred.

Before his own eclipse, Boogaerts enlarged the black-on-black photo taken with the lens cap on, for use in the article. The only photograph that could not lie about itself: total and final blackout. To his great joy, under magnification the hidden specks of dust glinted on the film like stars. Even at the heart of the darkest photograph he ever took, within the closed cave where light was turned into chemistry and mechanics, objective chance, the grain of sand in the machine – in short, life – had the last word. *Nothing will have taken place except the place ... except perhaps a constellation ...* (Mallarmé).

Montreal, March 1992

Selected Exhibitions by Pierre Boogaerts

Solo Exhibitions

1973 *Trois plantations à Véhicule*, Galerie Véhicule Art, Montreal

1975 *Références : plantation, jaune-bananier,* Galerie Optica, Montreal

"Synthétisation" du ciel, Galerie Gilles Gheerbrant, Montreal

1977 *Arte Fiera 77*, Bologna

Série écran, Palais des beaux-arts, Brussels

New York, N.Y., Galerie Gilles Gheerbrant and Galerie Optica, Montreal

1978 International Center of Photography, New York

1979 *Une après-midi sur mon balcon, Montréal, 18 août 1978*, Galerie Marielle Maillot, Montreal

Série écran : ciels de rues, N.Y. 1978/79, Galerie Gilles Gheerbrant, Montreal

1980 *Street Corners (Pyramids), N.Y. 1978/79*, Musée d'art contemporain and Galerie Gilles Gheerbrant, Montreal

Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y. 1978/79, The Ydessa Gallery, Toronto

1981 *Street Corners (Pyramids), N.Y. 1978/79*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver

Screen Series: Street Skies, N.Y. 1978/79, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Camera Series, N.Y. 1979, Galerie Sans Nom, Moncton

Pierre Boogaerts, N.Y. 1977–79, Photographs, 49th Parallel, Center for Contemporary Canadian Art, New York

Une après-midi sur mon balcon, Montréal, 18 août 1978, VU, Quebec City

1982 *Série écran/Screen Series*, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris

Une après-midi sur mon balcon, Montréal, 18 août 1978, Centre culturel de l'Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke

1983 Open Space Gallery, Victoria (British Columbia)

1986 *Fleurs, plantes et paysages*, Galerie d'art de Matane, Matane (Quebec)

1987 *Fleurs, plantes et paysages*, Centre culturel de l'Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke

1990 *Pierre Boogaerts : travaux photographiques–1984/89*, Galerie Séquence, Chicoutimi

Group Exhibitions

1971 *Jeune peinture belge*, Palais des beaux-arts, Brussels

1972 *Pour une replantation*, Palais des beaux-arts, Brussels

1973 *Jeune peinture belge*, Palais des beaux-arts, Brussels

1974 N.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago

1974 *Camerart*, Optica, Montreal

1975 *Conceptual*, Burpee Art Museum, Chicago

Jeune peinture belge, Palais des beaux-arts, Brussels

1976 *Véhicule's Véhicule*, Kensington Arts Association (K.A.A.) Gallery, Toronto

Agnes Etherington Art Gallery, Kingston (Ontario)

Cent onze dessins du Québec, Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal

Photograph as Art Work, Galerije Grada Zagreba, Zagreb (Yugoslavia)

Destination Europe, Exhibition organized by Optica, Montreal, then presented at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, as well as in Milan, Paris, Bologna, Venice, Rome, Barcelona, Amsterdam, and London

1972–1976: Directions Montréal, Galerie Véhicule Art, Montreal

1977 *03–23–03, Premières rencontres internationales d'art contemporain*, Montreal *Studies in Time and Motion*, Toronto Super-8 Film Festival, The Exhibition Gallery, Harbourfront, Toronto

montréal maintenant!, London Regional Art Gallery, London (Ontario)

Gheerbrant/Isaacs: 5 Montreal Artists, The Isaacs Gallery, Toronto

1978 *Transparent Things*, The Canada Council Art Bank, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver

The Winnipeg Perspective, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg

Studies in Time and Motion, Toronto Super-8 Film Festival, The Exhibition Gallery, Harbourfront, Toronto

Six years and then..., Optica, Montreal

Nouvelles acquisitions, Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal

Les livres d'artistes, Palais des beaux-arts, Brussels

1979 *I Have Lived*, The Photo Gallery, National Film Board of Canada, Ottawa

Black/White and Color, Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York

1980 *Pluralities*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Nuages, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris
4 x 16 x 20, Optica, Montreal
Art et photographie, C.G.R.E., Brussels

1981 *Suite, série, séquence*, Musée des beaux-arts, Nantes
Montréal, Alberta College of Art Gallery, Calgary

1982 *Quebec Art Now*, Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal
Affiches d'artistes, Place des Arts, Montreal
Clouds, Stewart Neill Gallery, New York
The Canada Council Art Bank, Burnaby Art Gallery, Burnaby (British Columbia)
Photo-Sculpture, Islip Art Museum, Long Island

1984 *Unconventional Photography*, Alvin Gallery, Hong Kong
Art Bank's Collection of Photography, Presentation House Gallery, Vancouver
Fragments : photographie actuelle au Québec, Vieux-Port, Quebec City
Contemporary Canadian Photography: From the collection of the National Film Board, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton

1985 *Les vingt ans du Musée à travers sa collection*, Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal

1986 *Six Contemporary Photographers*, Galerie Diana Archibald, Montreal
Œuvres excentrées, Galerie René Blouin, Montreal

1987 *Paysages contemporains : Pierre Boogaerts, Tony Cragg, Gloria Friedman, Giuseppe Penone*, Galerie Isy Brachot, Brussels
Histoire en quatre temps, Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal

1989 *Montréal 89 : aspects de la photographie québécoise contemporaine*, CREDAC, Ivry-sur-Seine (France)
Anamnèse, Dazibao, Centre de photographies actuelles, Montreal
Une histoire de collections : dons 1984–1989, Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal

1990 *Propos d'art contemporain : Figures d'accumulation*, Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal
Tandem Bis, Dazibao, Centre de photographies actuelles, Montreal
Work Sites, Concordia Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal

1992 *Beau*, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa

Exposition rétrospective – Volet I, Optica, Montreal

La collection : tableau inaugural, Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal

Legs René Payant, Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal

1993 *Canadian Reflections: The Nature of the Medium*, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa

Imaginaires d'architecture, Maison Hamel-Bruneau, Quebec City

De la perspective dans l'art contemporain, Centre d'exposition du Vieux-Palais, Saint-Jérôme (Quebec)

1994 *Flora Photographica*, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal

1995 *Et ainsi de suite...* Christiane Chassay and Circa galleries, Montreal

Présence de la photographie dans la collection du Musée du Québec, Musée du Québec, Quebec City

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Denis Lessard

This bibliography is not intended to be exhaustive, but to provide a research tool. Consequently, we have listed only works that contribute to the discourse on Boogaerts' oeuvre and not those relating to current artistic events. Three other bibliographies contain a number of references not included here. Josée Bélisle identified the main publications on the subject of Boogaerts up to 1982 in *Repères: Art actuel du Québec/Québec Art Now*. For an overview of photography in Quebec from 1975 to 1982, consult the bibliography by Denis Lessard in the catalogue *Photographie actuelle au Québec/Quebec Photography Invitational* (Montreal, Saidye Bronfman Centre, 1983, pp. 44–48), which includes several references to Boogaerts. The catalogue *Montréal 89: Aspects de la photographie québécoise contemporaine* also provides a number of significant additions.

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1970–1979

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